

Caribbean E-Outlook is a publication of the U.S. Small Business Administration Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands District Office

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Caribbean E-Outlook
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St. Croix Business is SBA's National 8(a) Graduate of the Year

The U.S. Small Business Administration has announced that St. Croix business Kelly's Cleaning Services will receive the SBA's 8(a) Graduate Firm of the Year Award during National Minority Enterprise Development Week celebrations to be held September 13 – 14 in Washington, DC.

Orneth La Corbinieri, president of Kelly's Cleaning Services, began operations in 1996, offering a complete range of maintenance and janitorial services, which include stripping, waxing, polishing, buffing and steam-cleaning to residential areas, along with general office cleaning and maintenance to the industrial and commercial fields.

In 1997, La Corbinieri obtained certification under the SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program, becoming the first woman-owned 8(a) certified firm in the Virgin Islands.

Throughout her participation in the 8(a) Program, the business woman continuously increased her opportunities for growth as she secured contracts with the federal government.

From a very small two-person operation that generated \$57,000 during its first year, Kelly's



*Orneth La Corbinieri
President
Kelly's Cleaning Services, Inc.*

Cleaning Services has grown to 15 employees and is currently generating close to \$700,000 in annual sales. Today, La Corbinieri is a successful graduate of the 8(a) Program.

"Ms. La Corbinieri competed against a list of impressive nominees from every state and territory in the U.S.," said William M. Manger, Jr., regional administrator for SBA's Region II. "She represents the hard work, the risk-taking, and the creativity that are the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur. These are the qualities that make Ms. La Corbinieri the National 8(a) Graduate Firm of the Year Award winner."

The end of fiscal year 2007 is almost here. Looking back on the months past, the challenges we have faced seem small compared to the great accomplishments we celebrate today.

In recent months, our district office successfully launched the Patriot Express Loan Initiative, and continues to get the word out on such an extraordinary business opportunity for the men and women who watch over our safety and defend the freedoms our nation enjoys.



Ana M. del Toro
Acting District Director

Today we also celebrate with our sister island of St. Croix the success achieved nationally by Orneth La Corbinieri, founder and president of Kelly's Cleaning Services. To have been selected to receive SBA's 8(a) Graduate Firm of the Year Award is no small feat, and Ms. La Corbinieri is a live example of what small business ownership is all about: hard work, dedication and perseverance.

Furthermore, we cannot forget the thousands of men and women entrepreneurs who approach the SBA or one of its resource partners every day seeking financial, management and/or technical assistance to help start or grow their own business. We are proud to work on their behalf. Their interest will guide our efforts.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ana M. del Toro'.

Cont'd from cover

Acting District Director Ana M. del Toro added that "our district office is extremely proud to see one of our own be recognized at a national level. The award Ms. La Corbinieri will receive is proof of her dedication and commitment as well as an example of what a woman entrepreneur's tenacity can accomplish."

This year's National MED Week Conference, marks the 25th year that SBA has joined the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency as a partner in highlighting the achievements of minority-owned businesses.

For more information on this year's MED Week celebrations visit <http://www.medweek.gov>.

UPCOMING EVENTS

National MED Week

Dates: September 13 – 14

Place: Washington, DC

Visit: www.medweek.gov

SBA @ SME Convention / Expo

Date: September 13 - 15

Place: Westin Rio Mar Beach Resort

Call: (787) 764-8595 / 764-8171

SBA @ USHCC Conference

Date: September 19 -22

Place: Puerto Rico Convention Center

Call: (202) 429-0516

8(a) Pre-certification Workshop

Date: Wednesday, September 26

Time: 9:00 – 11:30 AM

Place: SBA District Office

Call: (787) 766-5572, ext. 233



The Puerto Rico Small Business & Technology Development Center, in a joint effort with the Inter American University, recently inaugurated its new *Centro InterEmpresa*. Located at the Telecommunications and Information Technology Center of the university's main campus in San Juan, *Centro InterEmpresa* is aimed at providing students with the right tools and resources that will set them on the path towards entrepreneurship.

At the ribbon cutting ceremony, from left to right, are: Javier Billoch, PR-SBTDC regional director; Liana González, SBA district counsel; Carmen Martí, PR-SBTDC executive director; Manuel J. Fernós, Inter American University president; and Marilina Wayland, Inter American University chancellor.

Woman Entrepreneur Turns it around with SBA Micro-Loan Program and Technical Assistance

Seventeen years ago, Susana Cotarelo left her native Argentina in search of different opportunities for her family.

“My mother had passed away and I had been her main caregiver, so there really wasn’t anything holding me back,” Susana says. “My brother had moved to Puerto Rico many years before and was happy here. My husband and I thought it would be a good change for us and our children.”

In Puerto Rico, both Susana and her husband Carlos found jobs at a furniture factory, a big change from their experiences back home. Susana had a law degree and Carlos had completed studies in both auto mechanics and in international cuisine.

Once the couple had settled in, Susana complimented their income by making Argentinean turnovers that she would sell to neighbors, friends and relatives. Her health, however, began to suffer due to her exposure to asbestos at the factory, and Susana had no other choice but to quit her job. Turnovers suddenly became her only source of income, and Susana knew that there was an opportunity there.

“I knew I had to do something quick,” Susana says. “That is when I visited the Women’s Business Institute.”

Established in 1997 under a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the University of the Sacred Heart, the WBI provides women entrepreneurs with business training and counseling, technical assistance, mentoring, and access to the SBA’s programs and services.

Thousands of women benefit every year from the WBI’s assistance.

It was at the WBI that Susana learned of SBA’s Micro-Loan Program and in September 2003 she paid a visit to the only authorized Micro-Loan intermediary in Puerto Rico --the Corporation for the Economic Development of the Capital City (COFECC, by its Spanish acronym).

At COFECC, Susana and Carlos applied for a small loan, which they used for working capital and to finance the purchase of equipment. They were ready to start their business; nevertheless, the Food and Drug Administration took longer than Susana expected to approve her products.

“It was a very difficult process, due to the permits required,” she recalls. “I spent more than a year waiting.”

Finally, in February 2005 *Productos El Gauchito* took off. Carlos eventually left his job and joined Susana full time, using his knowledge of the food industry to help garner clients.

Currently, Susana and her two employees make close to 20,000 Argentinean turnovers a month, from the traditional guava, beef or chicken, to more gourmet turnovers like the ones made of spinach, Roquefort cheese, cognac and nuts, and the Capresse, which are stuffed with mozzarella cheese, tomato and basil. Carlos and their two sons are in charge of delivering to clients.

Productos El Gauchito turnovers can be found at La Hacienda Meat Center, at some convenience stores and restaurants, and in many hotels throughout the Island, whose chefs have not hesitated in writing to Susana to congratulate her for the quality of her turnovers.

“It gives me great satisfaction to know that my products have such an acceptance,” Susana declares. “You start slow, bit by bit. Life leads you along the way and it is just a matter of adapting.”

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3013 Estate Golden Rock
Room 167
Christiansted, St Croix, V.I. 00820
Phone: (340) 778-5380

It's Time for r3: Regulatory Review and Reform

By Christine Serrano Glassner

At a price tag of over \$1 trillion annually, federal regulations now cost more per household than healthcare. And, small business owners bear the brunt of government mandates as they pay 45 percent more per employee than big businesses do. Now, there is a way to try to lighten that load.

The Regulatory Review and Reform (r3) initiative run by the Office of Advocacy of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) encourages federal agencies to reduce the burden of existing regulations on small business.

A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report documented the need for more public participation and transparency in federal agencies' review of existing regulations. The report spotlighted agencies' compliance with section 610 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), which mandates that agencies periodically examine their existing regulations and consider ways to minimize the burden on small business.

The GAO found that agency implementation of section 610 review often suffers from a lack of clear standards, insufficient public participation, and inadequate communication of the results to stakeholders.

The Office of Advocacy's r3 initiative addresses these issues

by offering agencies training on implementation of section 610 of the RFA, soliciting recommendations from the small business community on rules to review, and providing public updates on the status of agency reviews.

We encourage small business owners to nominate federal regulations needing review and reform by reaching us through the r3 web site at www.sba.gov/advo/r3.

At over \$1.1 trillion per year, the cumulative burden of complying with federal regulations has reached a critical point. The Office of Advocacy is committed to doing something about it. With your help and r3 nominations, we will.

Christine Serrano Glassner is Regional Advocate for SBA's Region II. She is the direct link between small business owners, state and local government agencies, state legislators, small business associations, and SBA's Office of Advocacy.

PR & USVI Loan Production as of July 31, 2007 vs. 2006

Lender	2007 Loans	\$\$\$ Value	2006 Loans	\$\$\$ Value
Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria	79	\$6,726,658	137	\$10,451,300
Banco Popular de Puerto Rico *	275	\$27,753,300	412	\$41,016,290
Banco Santander Puerto Rico	55	\$5,091,800	165	\$14,561,500
Business Loan Center	14	\$457,000	30	\$975,000
Citibank, N.A.	77	\$3,940,500	10	\$265,000
Cooperativa Ahorro y Crédito Aguada	0	\$0	1	\$50,000
Doral Bank	25	\$1,003,000	28	\$2,779,300
Economic Development Bank for PR	1	\$201,000	2	\$575,400
Firstbank *	36	\$4,133,650	44	\$4,301,400
Oriental Bank & Trust	2	\$347,000	1	\$175,000
Scotiabank Puerto Rico	2	\$185,000	7	\$540,000
** COFECC	21	\$8,165,000	23	\$5,806,000
** Marketing Small Business Finance Corp.	17	\$3,715,000	47	\$19,147,000
** North PR Local Development Co.	5	\$2,628,000	3	\$1,127,000
** PR Business Development Corp.	10	\$3,639,000	12	\$5,086,000
** PYMES Financial Partners	35	\$13,249,000	15	\$4,209,000
TOTALS	654	\$81,234,908	937	\$111,065,190